

Social Sciences in Brazil: the challenges of mass higher education

Simon Schwartzman

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1. Introduction: a sociological view of the social sciences

This paper tries to look at the social sciences in Brazil from a modern sociological approach. This perspective rejects both the traditional view, that scientific knowledge develops according to its own internal logic, irrespective of its social and cultural context, and the old sociological ambition to explain scientific knowledge by social, cultural or economic conditions. The current view is that knowledge - be it scientific or common-sense, about nature or about men - is the product of social processes which create concepts, instruments and notions of truth through complex processes of negotiation between researchers, their readers, the users of their ideas, nature¹. In the social sciences, it is usual to talk about "discourse"² Instead of "science" to stress this view, but there is no essential difference between the structuration of knowledge that takes place in the social field and the one that takes place in the natural sciences.

In practice, this approach means that we will not understand much about the social sciences (or, for that matter, about any scientific field) if we look at it just from a specific methodological or

¹ See for instance Bruno Latour, *Science in Action: how to follow scientists and engineers through society*. Harvard University Press, 1987.

² See for instance Peter Wagner, Richard Whitley and Björn Wittrock, *Discourses on society: the shaping of the social science disciplines*, Kluwer Academic, Dordrecht ; London, 1991 (Sociology of the sciences series, v. 15).

theoretical point of view - for instance, to see if it is "scientific" or "rigorous" enough. It means also that we cannot go very far if we just tried to look at the scientists' ideological and political inclinations. The task is much harder, and more interesting: to see how knowledge is structured in a given social context, in a permanent negotiation among different intellectual traditions, professional communities, financing agencies and the larger public of listeners and users of the final products. Because this structuration is so specific, there is a new tradition in the study of specific bits of scientific knowledge, mostly in the natural sciences, to reveal their social nature. This paper does not follow this tradition, but it may help to set the scene from which such studies can develop. It starts by an overview of the origins of social science in Brazil, the broad context of mass higher education where it belongs today, and then explores some alternatives of interaction between the social scientists and their broader environment.

2. The origins of social sciences in Brazil

Most graduate and research programs and institutions in Brazil were created at the time of the expansion of higher education that took place in the sixties and seventies, but their intellectual and historical roots lie elsewhere. There were no institutionalized social sciences in Brazil before the 1930s, but it is not difficult to draw a list of creative and influential intellectuals writing on social, political and historical issues dating from the last century³. They belonged to different

³ See for instance Luis Washington Vita, *Antologia do Pensamento Social e Político no Brasil*, São Paulo, União Panamericana/ Grijalbo, 1968; Vicente Barreto and Antônio Paim, *Evolução do pensamento político brasileiro*, Editora Itatiaia, Belo Horizonte / Editora da Universidade de São Paulo, 1989; Daniel Pécault, *Os intelectuais e a política no Brasil: o povo e a nação* (trad. M. J. Goldwasser); São Paulo, Ática, 1990; Sérgio Miceli, *Intelectuais e Classe Dirigente no Brasil (1929 - 1945)*. São Paulo, Difel, 1979; Sérgio Miceli (org), *História das ciências sociais no Brasil*; São Paulo, Vértice/ Revista dos Tribunais/IDESP, 1989; Howard S. Becker, "Social Theory in Brazil", *Sociological Theory* 1992, 10, 1, Spring, 1-5.

intellectual traditions: lawyers and social philosophers writing on political issues, such as Joaquim Nabuco, Rui Barbosa and Oliveira Viana; medical doctors writing on social problems and the needs for eugenics and public hygiene, such as Nina Rodrigues; writers and journalists, such as Euclides da Cunha, Sérgio Buarque de Holanda, Paulo Duarte and Antônio Cândido; educators with some contact with the European and American context, such as Anísio Teixeira and Fernando de Azevedo; and even a few with specific training in the modern social sciences, such as Gilberto Freyre, who studied with Franz Boas at Columbia University. Their working style was closer to the French intellectual than to the American academic. They wrote to the wider, non specialized educated public, traveled frequently to Europe, circulated in higher circles, and kept expensive libraries in their homes.

A useful way of trying to understand the different styles and approaches of these intellectuals is to contrast the traditions of Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo and other parts of the country, such as the Northeast. The Rio de Janeiro intellectuals were closer to the political center, and tended to develop broad institutional interpretations and theories for social reform, which could catch the attention of the powers-to-be. Those in São Paulo and the Northeast were closer to literature and broad social and cultural interpretations. The creation of the Universidade de São Paulo in 1934, which coincided with the explosion of the regional literature in the Northeast (with authors such as Jorge Amado, Graciliano Ramos, José Lins do Rego and Rachel de Queiroz) set the two traditions wide apart. In São Paulo, it was the beginning of institutionalized social sciences, with women and children of European immigrants opening their space through the academic ranks of the new university. Two social sciences institutions were created in the thirties. The best known today is the Faculty of Philosophy of São Paulo University, staffed with French social scientists such as Roger Bastide, who trained Florestan Fernandes, who in turn was the senior of Fernando

Henrique Cardoso, Octávio Ianni and of most of the São Paulo group⁴. More important at the time, probably, was the School of Sociology and Political Science, which relied on U.S. social scientists in a project to create a place for the training of the state's business and political elites. The Northeast intellectuals remained overwhelmed by their fiction writers, and even Gilberto Freyre, who was influential enough to create his own research institution (the Instituto Joaquim Nabuco in Recife), could not generate a tradition of research and education which could follow his steps.

In Rio de Janeiro, the Universidade do Brasil (now the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro) was created in the 1930's under the strong influence of the conservative Catholic Church and the right-wing "integralistas," whose best known public figures, such as Alceu Amoroso Lima, Plínio Salgado and Santiago Dantas, did not open much space for the modern social sciences⁵. After the Second World War, several government and semi-government institutions, some of them incipient in the previous years, acquired some presence and notoriety: the Fundação Getúlio Vargas, originated from the group that managed Getúlio Vargas' Department of Public Administration, DASP, was the place of Brazil's first school of public administration (EBAP, with Benedito Silva, Beatriz Walrich and Alberto Guerreiro Ramos), the Brazilian Institute of Economics Research (IBRE, with Eugênio Gudin) and the Institute of Public Law and Political

⁴ For Bastide's own view of his influence, see Roger Bastide, "The Present Status of Afro-American Research in Latin America", *Daedalus* 1974, 103, 2, Spr, 111-123. Claude Lévy-Strauss was also present for a brief period, and kept personal ties with Brazilian intellectuals. For his own dismaying view of the São Paulo intellectual scene at the time, see C. Lévy-Strauss, *Tristes Tropiques*, Paris, Plon, 1955.

⁵ For the creation of the universities of Rio and São Paulo and the influence of the conservative Catholic Church, see S. Schwartzman, H. Bomeny and V. Costa, *Tempos de Capanema*, Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo: Editora Paz e Terra e Editora da Universidade de São Paulo, 1984. About the "integralista" movement, see Ricardo Benzaquen de Araújo, *Totalitarismo e revolução : o integralismo de Plínio Salgado*, Jorge Zahar Editor, Rio de Janeiro, 1988.

Science (INDIPO, under Themístocles Cavalcanti); the National Institute of Pedagogical Studies (INEP) led by Anísio Teixeira and Darcy Ribeiro; and, since the mid-fifties, the Instituto Superior de Estudos Brasileiros (ISEB), under the leadership of Hélio Jaguaribe, and the participation of most Rio de Janeiro social science intellectuals, such as Alberto Guerreiro Ramos, Cândido Mendes de Almeida, Álvaro Vieira Pinto and Celso Furtado. The old National Museum was the place of the first institutionalized research group on anthropology, which became, with Roberto Cardoso de Oliveira, the first Brazilian graduate and research program in this field. Rio de Janeiro was also the seat of one of the few international research organizations in the country, the UNESCO sponsored Centro Latinoamericano de Pesquisas em Ciências Sociais (under José Luís da Costa Pinto and Manoel Diegues Jr), which carried out a few large surveys and edited the journal *América Latina*.

3. Rise and fall of social sciences as criticism

Throughout the fifties and sixties, as the Brazilian society and economy became more complex, and its social problems more evident, the more establishment-oriented institutions waned in prestige and public presence, while others stressed their intellectual roles of social criticism. In São Paulo, the School of Sociology and Political Science agonized, while the intellectuals at the Faculdade de Filosofia organized the famous reading group of Karl Marx's *The Capital*, and moved from the studies on race pioneered by Roger Bastide and Florestan Fernandes to the studies on the working class, the entrepreneurs, the state, and the development of the "dependency theory." In Rio de Janeiro, the School of Public Administration at Fundação Getúlio Vargas failed in its intent to become the Brazilian version of France's *École Nationale d'Administration*. One of its professors, Alberto Guerreiro Ramos, a black intellectual who entered public life during the Estado Novo through the Catholic right, became an outspoken

critic of the Brazilian social science tradition, and, later at the ISEB, a well-known proponent of a radically Brazilian social science which could provide the framework for a nationalist revolution, led by the country's intellectuals⁶. The Institute of Educational Research (INEP), after delving into the social roots of Brazil's educational problems, became the springboard of Darcy Ribeiro's political career, in the early sixties, as the founder of the Universidade de Brasília and a key minister of the João Goulart government, and since the eighties as the main ally of Rio de Janeiro's governor Leonel Brizola, and the source of his educational proposals.

The natural links that existed at the time between the academic social scientists and the students, journalists, union leaders and other sectors of the country's educated left, started to crumble after the 1964 military coup. It was a difficult and confusing process, still not very well understood and accepted. As the military regime increased its repression against the opposition, radicalization increased, armed resistance started to be organized among the students, and the intellectuals had to decide whether to join the guerrillas, to leave the country as political expatriates, or to find a space where they could continue to work. Individual reactions went from full commitment with the revolutionaries to outright adhesion to the military regime and all positions in between, leading often to bitter resentment and hostility among persons who, just a few years before, were considered to share the same values and perspectives.

It was not impossible to stay in the country, remain intellectually independent, continue to do research and write on social and political issues during the years of military government, but it

⁶ See for instance Maria C. Mariani, "Educação e Ciências Sociais: O Instituto Nacional de Estudos e Pesquisas Educacionais", in S. Schwartzman (ed), *Universidades e Instituições Científicas no Rio de Janeiro*, CNPq, Brasília, 1982; Caio N. Toledo, 1978 - *ISEB, Fábrica de Ideologia*. São Paulo, Atica; S. Schwartzman (org), *O Pensamento Nacionalista e os 'Cadernos de Nosso Tempo'*, Brasília, Editora da Universidade de Brasília, 1981.

required some special conditions. A clear identification with the Communist Party or some of the new left-wing political movements was fatal. International links and support were very important. For some years, as the public universities became inhospitable for the social sciences, new, semi-private arrangements had to be made. The Ford Foundation, committed to a liberal political agenda, helped to sustain graduate and research programs in the social sciences in Minas Gerais (the Department of Political Science at the Universidade Federal de Minas Gerais), Rio de Janeiro (the Instituto Universitário de Pesquisas), São Paulo (the Centro Brasileiro de Análise e Planejamento, CEBRAP) and other parts of the country, and provided fellowships that were sometimes used to rescue persons under political persecution⁷. To wear the scientist's hat also helped. The Brazilian Society for the Advancement of Sciences remained one of the few institutions with the authority to speak up against the government and get access to the press during the darker years of authoritarianism, and social scientists joined the natural scientists on that⁸. Finally, the Brazilian military regime was not an authoritarian monolith, and, particularly during the Ernesto Geisel's presidency after 1975, spaces started to open for graduate education and research within and outside the government, with growing public support, and diminishing political control. Starting in the late 1970s, resources started to flow from governmental agencies in the science and technology sector to several social sciences groups and institutions. One of the outstanding institutions developed in this period was IPEA, the planning and research institute

⁷ For a comparative view of this process, see José Joaquín Brunner and A. Barrios, *Inquisición, mercado y filantropía: ciencias sociales y autoritarismo en Argentina, Brasil, Chile y Uruguay*, Santiago, FLACSO, 1987.

⁸ See Ana Maria Fernandes, *The scientific community and the state in Brazil: the role of the Brazilian Society for the Advancement of Science, 1948-1980*. Doctoral Dissertation, St. Antony's College, Trinity Term, 1987, 385p; and Antônio J. Botelho, "Struggling to Survive: The Brazilian Society for the Progress of Science (SBPC) and the authoritarian regime (1964-1980)", *Historia Scientiarum* 38 (1989), 46-63.

created under the Ministry of Planning, which was responsible for the first studies on income inequality which challenged the economic model of those years.

The political defeat of the left, and the achievements and banners of the military regime in some areas - economic growth, industrialization, extension of social security to the rural areas, expansion of scientific research and graduate education, and even an independent foreign policy, less aligned with the United States - forced a deep rethinking of traditional subjects and political standing of the country's intellectuals. There were many problems that the military regime did not address, or aggravated - from social inequality, basic education and public health to the protection of individual and political rights. But it was difficult, after some point, to persevere in the idea that Brazil's problems were simply the consequence of its "good people" - the peasants, the workers, the Indians, the favela dwellers - being exploited by the foreign interests and their national allies. The problems remained, and were often aggravated, when civilian rule was reestablished in Brazil after 1985. This stand could still be the basis of a strictly political agenda, and for some intellectuals, and specially for some who remained in political exile during most years of the military regime, they became just that. For others, working in the public and often private institutions built in the recent years, a new agenda was gradually being built. In politics, it was necessary to understand the population's voting patterns, the workings of public opinion, the political party system, the historical and present roles of the legislative, judiciary and the executive, including the military, and to gain a comparative perspective on these issues, opening the way for new alternatives and possibilities. In sociology and anthropology, questions like population growth, social inequality, basic education, urban violence, urban and rural subcultures, sexual behavior, the integration and protection of the Indian population came to the foreground. Economists had to deal with the issues of inflation, industrial policy, international

trade, employment, competitiveness... These issues required familiarity with contemporary theories, a strong comparative approach, and the mastery of new analytical and methodological tools. They required also a revision of the traditional intellectual role social scientists were used to play in the recent past.

4. The challenge of mass education: quantity and quality.

This need for change in perspectives and roles coincided with an explosion of enrollments in Brazil's higher education, which gained speed in the mid-seventies, bringing enrollments from about 300 thousand to 1.5 million in less than two decades, and was accompanied by the creation of a new layer of graduate education on top of the traditional professional faculties. A large part of this expansion took place in the social sciences, particularly in the so-called "social professions," such as administration, accounting and law.

The consequence was that, compared with most countries, social sciences in Brazil became a large operation. At the top, there now are about 130 graduate programs in the social sciences and the humanities, enrolling about 2.5 thousand students in doctoral and 16.6 thousand in master degree programs. The annual meeting of the National Association of Graduate and Research programs in the social sciences brings together several hundred participants presenting papers in a wide range of subjects. At the basis, there are around thirteen thousand students enrolled in undergraduate courses of social sciences, sixty-five thousand in related fields (history, geography, philosophy), 150 thousand in teacher training courses of languages, education and social studies, and 568 thousand in the social professions, such as administration, law,

accounting, journalism, economics and others. In total, the social sciences and related fields account for 55% of all enrollments in Brazilian undergraduate education, as indicated in table 1.

Table 1: Brazil, enrollment in undergraduate careers, by type of institution, 1991 (percentages).			
	Public institutions (federal and state) (%)	Private and local institutions (%)	Total number of students enrolled (100%)
Administration	15.6	84.4	177,838
Law	18.9	81.1	159,390
engineering	43.8	56.2	140,308
Education	27.5	72.5	116,253
Accounting	20.3	79.7	97,223
languages (teaching)	38.8	61.2	92,891
Economics	27.8	72.2	71,765
Sciences (teaching)	23.1	76.9	55,062
Psychology	17.7	82.3	50,104
medicine	58.6	41.4	46,881
Social Communication (journalism)	21.5	78.5	43,462
history	51.1	48.9	36,303
sports	36.2	63.8	34,703
dentistry	43.4	56.6	30,575
geography	62.8	37.2	25,690
Data processing	11.2	88.8	24,895
nursing	52.8	47.2	22,237
mathematics (teaching)	54.6	45.4	21,955
Architecture and urbanism	36.9	63.1	21,881
Agronomy	73.6	26.4	21,176
biological sciences	50.1	49.9	20,973
social work	37.3		19,156
social studies (teaching)	11.1	88.9	19,064
pharmacy	64.9	35.1	16,923
artistic education	36.2	63.8	14,972
computer sciences	31.4	68.6	13,903
social sciences	60.7	39.3	13,323
veterinary medicine	71.9	28.1	12,076
Physiotherapy	18	82.0	11,379
philosophy	55.9	44.1	10,300
Total, these careers	31.5	68.5	1,442,661
Total, all careers	33.4	66.6	1,565,056
Source: data from Brazil, Ministério da Educação, 1993, processed by the author.			

Table 2: graduate education programs in Brazil, 1989			
Field	Programs	Faculty	Students
'Exact' sciences	131	4,173	6,861
Biological sciences	112	3,541	4,322
Health	225	6,630	5,712
Agricultural sciences	113	4,093	3,904
Applied Social sciences	91	3,085	5,896
social sciences and humanities	144	3,389	5,986
languages, literature	53	1,164	2,275
Total	965	28,550	36,328
Source: Divonzir Gusso and Eunice Durham, "Pós-Graduação no Brasil: Problemas e Perspectivas," MEC-CAPEs, 1991, mimeo.			

In very broad terms, this picture is as it should be. Brazil does not have a tradition of general education at the post secondary level, the usual assumption being that each degree program should lead to a specific profession, if possible defined and protected by law. From this point of view, the spread of "semi-professions" such as the social sciences can be seen as very problematical. However, higher education everywhere provides ample space for the acquisition of broad social and administrative skills, leaving a relatively smaller place for the natural sciences and the liberal, technical and health professions. Except for law, which still maintains the characteristics of a liberal profession, most undergraduate degrees in the social sciences do not (and probably should not) lead to well-defined occupations, but, at their best, should provide general skills appropriate for a changing and unstable labor market. From a strict quantitative point of view, the main problem with higher education in the social sciences in Brazil is that it could be much larger than it is. Brazil enrolls only about 10% of the corresponding age cohort in

higher education, when the typical proportion in most Western countries, including Latin America, is between twenty and 40%.

The existence of a large basis of undergraduate education was a crucial factor in the extraordinary development of the social sciences graduate programs in the United States along this century, and, in consequence, of research and scholarship. In Brazil also, the existence of a large basis of undergraduate programs provides an extended academic labor market for social scientists. There are in Brazil about 150 thousand university lecturers, and one could assume that at least half of them are in the social sciences and the humanities. Public universities require graduate degrees and research competence for rank promotion, and in the leading universities this requirement is enforced, creating demand of graduate education and a labor market for well-qualified academics. Here again, there is still much room for expansion. Only about 13% of the Brazilian academics have doctoral degrees, about 33% have either a master's or a higher degree, and the number of degrees awarded each year by the graduate programs is far from what is necessary to improve this situation⁹.

Unfortunately, still in quantitative terms, there are serious problems of quality with the Brazilian social sciences. A first indication is the large concentration of the social science undergraduate programs in the private sector, as shown in table 1. The private sector, which developed in the 1970's as a compensation for the limited expansion of public institutions, is usually considered of

⁹ Since the average ages of those having undergraduate, masters and doctoral degrees are about the same, between forty and forty-five, one can assume that these are not stages in an academic career, but different rank positions in a stratified academic system. The information on age, and others that will be used in this text, comes from the Brazilian part of the international comparative survey of the professorate, coordinated by the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, Princeton, N. J.

lower quality¹⁰. Most of its courses are given in the evening, and most of the lecturers are part time and lack adequate academic degrees. The students are usually those that failed the entrance examinations for public institutions, which means that they tend to come from lower social strata than those in the public sector, and their secondary education is not very good. Because the students do not have the means, the institutions have to keep tuition low, and save on equipment, libraries, building and almost anything besides formal teaching for packed classrooms.

One wonders why students persist in paying for courses of low quality that provide degrees of doubtful market value. One possible answer is that, even if the teaching is bad, the academic credential can make a difference; this explains why law is the second-largest career in the country, after administration, and followed closely by accounting, which is also a profession where formal credentials are essential. Even in poorly regulated professions, such as administration and social communication (journalism) to have a university degree helps to gain a better place in the job market compared with those that have none. There is also a generational explanation: in the Brazilian urban middle classes today, "everybody" is expected to go to a university, and the social sciences professions are easier for those with fewer qualifications. One can also assume that, however bad is the education provided in the social sciences courses, there will be always some additional knowledge to be gained, which can have both a personal and a market value.

There are other signs of stress. The dropout rate in the social sciences is extremely high. Even in the University of São Paulo, which is supposed to be the best in the country, only about 25% of

¹⁰ Catholic universities have existed since the early forties, and other private teaching institutions much before that, but the rapid expansion of the sector is a relatively new phenomena. For the expansion of private higher education in Latin America, see Daniel C. Levy, *Higher Education and the State in Latin America Private Challenge to Public Dominance*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1986.

those entering the course of social sciences ever get their degrees. Higher education has not expanded in Brazil since the early eighties, in spite of continuous demographic growth, probably because of the prolonged economic crisis, and both the private sector and the social sciences have been particularly affected.

Graduate education and research is also at pains to pass the usual quantitative tests. Only about 25% of the students who enroll in graduate education ever get their degrees. The number of published works is small, and the presence of Brazilian social sciences in the international literature is also low¹¹.

5. Effects and reactions to the challenge

As the social sciences establishment grew larger, it became also more stratified and differentiated, as it happens with science and scholarship everywhere. This situation was probably made worse, for the Brazilian social sciences, by a breakdown of contact and communication between the leading institutions and academics and the expanding basis of their discipline.

There were two opposite reasons for this breakdown. In one extreme, the attempts to move the social sciences in the direction of better scholarship, increased theoretical and methodological sophistication, failed to find adequate response. As the number of candidates for graduate

¹¹ A search in the computerized archive of "Sociological Abstracts" produced 319 references under the subject "Brazil", only 18% of those written by identifiable Brazilian authors. The Carnegie Foundation survey showed that, in a sample of academic professors, social scientists with doctoral degrees published about two articles a year, a percentage reduced to a little more than two if those with masters degrees were included. Limited as this type of information may be, it suggests that the knowledge that exists about Brazil in the international literature is mostly provided by non-Brazilians.

degrees expanded, more graduate students had difficulty reading foreign languages, making use of mathematical skills, and getting into more complex theorizing. Worse, given the usual low quality of the social science courses where they would have to teach, all this effort appeared as without purpose. This absence of local interest could be compensated by international linkages and support, but international agencies in the nineties are much more pragmatic and action-oriented than in the past, and not very interested in supporting the same kind of social sciences they have in their own societies.

The other breakdown occurred with those who attempted to persist in the same kind of critical discourse of the sixties. If in the past the students would enter the social sciences with the hope of learning how to be involved in politics and change society, now they prefer to study business administration and law, and try to get a job. The breakdown of the ideological thinking was helped by the breakdown of "real socialism," but preceded it in a few years. Instead of the hope for a redeeming national revolution, there is now a search for particular identities, be they racial, regional, sexual or religious. Instead of proposals for global change, there are now growing demands for the understanding and solution of specific problems, from violence to absolute poverty, from environment deterioration to poor education institutions.

One still hears some rumblings of the old ideological discourse, but it has now moved to the fringe of the social sciences establishment, the faculties of education, history and geography. It is a discourse that may still bring people together and give form to their feelings in situations of frustration and lack of perspectives, but cannot gain the national and international repercussion it once had, in the old days of "dependencia."

What is replacing the traditional ideological thinking is a fragmented view of society, and of social sciences itself. One direction of this fragmentation is the abdication of the holistic discourses of the past, and the development of a broad range of specializations and specific competencies. There is a large task to be performed in this direction, from the preparation of text books for the hundreds of thousands of students in the social professions to the involvement in public and private actions to solve the country's social problems. The Brazilian social scientists do not have, however, the necessary skills, and the Brazilian society has not developed, as yet, the appropriate institutions to give support and continuity to this type of specialization. The other direction, which so far seems dominant, is the search for the unique and irreplaceable. It is as if the main role of the social sciences were to tell, repeatedly, how unique we are - we Latin Americans, Brazilians, mineiros, women, blacks, residents of each small town - and how unique was our history. The intellectual heroes of this brand of social science are literary figures and philosophic gurus, and its main criteria of validity are the experiences of personal empathy one can have reading their books, or attending to their lectures¹².

One could reinterpret these alternatives in terms of two dilemmas that inform the social scientists' discourse, and have to do with the perception of their own position in society. The first is a matter of localism vs. cosmopolitanism. Is Brazilian society - and its social scientists - part of a broader community, with similar problems, questions and concerns? Or it is a peculiar, unique and singular reality, which requires its own singular, unique social scientists as interpreters? The second is a matter of empowerment vs. alienation. Who is responsible, who has the powers to deal with the country's social questions? Is the Brazilian society - and its social

¹² For an analysis and criticism of this trend, see Fábio Wanderley Reis, *Avaliação das Ciências Sociais*, paper prepared for the PADCT science policy study, Fundação Getúlio Vargas, 1994.

scientists - made up of actors, or of victims of external enemies and unforeseeable circumstances? The table below tries to map some alternative approaches to the social science in terms of these dimensions.

Table 3 - alternative approaches to the social sciences		
	Empowerment: society formed by actors	Alienation: society formed by victims
Cosmopolitanism: all societies are similar	A - Specialized knowledge, theories of economic, political and social change, of internal conflicts and dilemmas	B - theories of dependency, exploitation, external conflicts
Localism: our reality is unique	C - global interpretations, studies of cultural specificity, traditions	D - sociology of the oppressed, alternative values and lifestyles.

It would not be difficult to map most of what is being produced in the social sciences in Brazil to one of the four cells of this table. They all coexist, and one could probably interpret most of the tensions, discussions and debates among social scientists in terms of the efforts to push the discipline from one to another cell. It would be a mistake to assume that one is more "real" than the others, or more "scientific." However, they are profoundly different in terms of who gets involved and benefits from the social scientist's work, what kind of support they can get, and in terms of the intellectual style and culture they foster - more or less technical, more or less historical, more or less militant, more or less parochial. We can assume that, as long as these tensions exist, the social sciences in Brazil are not in bad shape after all.